

- 1 -

TITLE

DECORATIVE GIFT ARTICLE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention is generally directed to a decorative gift article. In particular, the present invention is directed to a decorative gift article that is attached to or is an integral part of a gift package for small gifts, such as pieces of candy, that may be given alone or attached to a wrapped gift.

Related Background Art

[0002] Gifts given on special occasions, such as birthdays, are often wrapped in brightly colored and decorated paper, typically having a design that

"Express Mail" mailing label number EV 0951555036 US

Date of Deposit February 19, 2004

I hereby certify that this paper or fee is being deposited with the United States Postal Service "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee" service under 37 CFR 1.10 on the date indicated above and is addressed to: Commissioner of Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA, 22313-1450

Alan P. Force (39,673)

(Typed or printed name of person mailing paper or fee)

Alan P. Force

(Signature of person mailing paper or fee)

reflects the special occasion. The wrapping paper adds a festive appearance to the gift, and helps to add an element of surprise. The use of decorations, such as decorative bows and ribbons, with or without other adornment, is typically expected, and all but required on gift packages today. Thus, bows, ribbons, and other decorations for gift packages are known in the art.

[0003] For example, U.S. Patent No. 6,080,459 to Keller discloses a decorative ribbon having a controllable adhesive that permits the ribbon to be adhered to a gift package, but also to be removed, and relocated on the package. The ribbon may include an incomplete die cut to provide for decorative stand-up portions, decorative cutouts, or messages in the ribbon.

[0004] U.S. Patent No. 5,614,274 to Huss discloses a preformed bow that, in at least one application, has a layer of pressure sensitive adhesive for adhering the bow to an object.

[0005] U.S. Patent No. 5,702,778 to Andonian discloses a gift-package ornament for enhancing the decorative appearance of a gift, where the ornament includes an upright figure and a flexible base that can be affixed to a surface or a gift.

[0006] U.S. Patent No. 5,236,725 to McCormack et al. discloses a candy package for stick candy that includes a clip for attaching a bow or a gift card to the package. The bow and card are attached to the clip by adhesive or a twist-tie member that is looped around folded ribbon to give the appearance of a tied bow.

[0007] U.S. Patent No. 5,683,769 to Chung discloses a decorative gift article that incorporates a pouch to accommodate gift items. A decorative ribbon can be tied to a center portion of the pouch to constrict it to retain items, such as jewelry or candy, in the pouch.

[0008] U.S. Patent No. 1,238,110 to Coolidge discloses a candy container in which candy pieces simulate fruit or nuts, and are arranged to resemble a bouquet.

[0009] U.S. Patent No. 5,052,560 to Stringham discloses a structure for holding confections for use in conventional greeting card envelopes. The structure has the form of a confection tray formed from a sheet of material having a generally planar upper surface with one or more relatively shallow open recesses or

receptacles. The recesses are shaped to hold a confection or other gift item so that the top of the item is generally flush with the upper surface of the sheet of material. The tray may be inserted into a folding greeting card.

[0010] U.S. Design Patent No. Des. 288,062 discloses a combined greeting card and candy package. The sides, top, and bottom of the package are all rectangular, and the top is printed with the words "Happy Birthday".

[0011] U.S. Patent No. 4,840,275 to Faiola et al. discloses a greeting card comprising a removable, transparent receptacle for a gift, such as a flower. The receptacle is detachably secured to the card for easy removal without damaging the card or detracting from the appearance of the card. The card may comprise means for securing the gift within the receptacle, or the gift may be secured by closing the card.

[0012] U.S. Patent No. 5,579,905 to Ingber et al. discloses a gift package including a candy CD in a CD holder that has a base and a transparent cover, where the cover holds a card that is visible through the cover, and contains a preprinted message.

[0013] U.S. Patent No. 6,277,452 to Craig discloses a "tethered fortune" that comprises a tether attached to a fortune card and charm. The charm may be encapsulated in a rigid capsule attached to the fortune card.

[0014] U.S. Patent No. 5,814,379 to Roccaforte discloses an ornamental band for encircling an object and a decorative element attached to the band. The band includes a strip of elastic material large enough to be stretched over and retained by the object.

[0015] U.S. Patent No. 5,693,386 to Cheng discloses a decorative gift article that comprises a decorative support and a retaining frame for holding one or more gift items. The retaining frame is configured to hold a gift item in confinement, while permitting at least a substantial portion of the gift item to be observed. No closure or other means of preventing exposure of the gift item to the environment is disclosed.

[0016] U.S. Patent No. 5,683,769 to Cheng discloses a decorative gift article that comprises a decorative support and at least one pouch to accommodate

gift items. The pouch is tied off with a ribbon or cord or the like to retain the gift items in the pouch. The pouch is advantageously a mesh-like material or netting.

[0017] U.S. Patent No. 5,377,836 to Eisenbraun discloses a display package that comprises a folding display card and a unitary blister package configured to hold the card in a folded configuration.

[0018] U.S. Patent No. 4,951,404 to Lithwick discloses a greeting card that comprises front and back panels and a flat container mounted in a cut-out in the front panel. The container is formed from a single, folded piece of thin sheet acrylic.

[0019] U.S. Patent No. 4,592,936 to Ferguson discloses an ornamental article that comprises a housing for holding a gift article, a viewing aperture for viewing a gift within the housing, and a closable lid.

[0020] U.S. Patent No. 4,294,350 to Haase, et al. discloses a shower party nameplate and favor that comprises a flexible mesh fabric bag and a cardboard name plate attached to the bag.

[0021] U.S. Patent No. 2,806,313 to James discloses a decorative center for package bows that comprises a center that is held in place by a fastener. The center may be hollow with a top opening. However, no closure for the opening is disclosed.

[0022] U.S. Patent No. Des. 431,878 to Holowich discloses a combined button and bow.

[0023] However, the applicant is not aware of any prior art that discloses a gift article, comprising a container for small gift items incorporated with or attached to a gift package decoration. The present invention provides such a gift article.

Summary of the Invention

[0024] The present invention provides a novel decorative gift article or package that includes a container for gift items integrated with or attached to a gift package decoration, such as a ribbon, decorative card, or bow. The container may be filled with one or more non-edible or edible gift items. Non-edible gift items include, but are not limited to, small toys, jewelry, cosmetics, and the like. Edible

gift items can be for human or pet consumption, such as nuts, pretzels, and confections, which may be wrapped or unwrapped, for humans, and snacks and treats, such as bones, biscuits, rawhide, and the like for pets. The filled article can then be associated with another gift package or box in the manner of a conventional gift package decoration, such as a ribbon or bow, to provide an interesting and inviting present.

[0025] The decorative gift package or article of the present invention comprises a gift package decoration, which may be symbolic of a festive event, or a ribbon, which may be in the form of a bow, or a combination of a ribbon and a symbolic gift package decoration. The decorative gift package of the invention further comprises a container that defines an interior volume configured for holding at least one gift item, and has a first configuration to secure items within the container, preferably in a manner that prevents exposure of the gift item to the environment, and a second configuration to provide access to items within the interior volume. The container is configured to hold smaller gift items, where the container opening provides access to the gift items within the interior volume.

[0026] The container may comprise one or more pieces. A one-piece container may have a punch-out, i.e., a pre-scored or weakened area, to access items within the container. Preferably, the container comprises a first portion and a second portion, where at least one of the first portion and the second portion defines at least a portion of an interior volume and an opening providing access to the interior volume. In one embodiment, the first portion defines the interior volume and the opening, and the second portion is configured to function as a lid for covering the opening, thereby securing small gift items within the interior volume. The container may be formed of any useful material known in the art. Preferably, at least a portion of the container is substantially rigid.

[0027] The container may be attached to the gift package decoration by any means known in the art, or the gift package decoration may be formed such that the container is part of the gift package decoration. For example, the gift package decoration may be a molded material defining a cavity that is the container, such that the gift package decoration and the container are a single piece. Optionally, the gift article further comprises at least one tag attached to the gift

package decoration or container that can bear a written legend like an address to which the article is to be sent or a brand name for the article.

[0028] Preferably, the article comprises an adhesive material on a portion of the gift package decoration or the container, configured to permit adhering the article to a gift package. For example, the adhesive material could be a peel-away adhesive backing on the gift package decoration. The adhesive may be of the type that permanently attaches the gift article to the gift package, or of the type that allows the gift article to be affixed to the package, removed, and repositioned on the package without damaging the gift package.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 is a front perspective view of a gift article in accordance with the invention in which the gift package decoration is a flexible bow, and the container cover is in place;

Fig. 2 is a front perspective view of the gift article, like Fig. 1, where the container cover has been removed;

Fig. 3 is a rear perspective view of the gift article of Fig. 1;

Fig. 4 is a front perspective view of a gift article in accordance with the invention, where the gift package decoration is a molded bow comprising the container;

Figs. 5A to 5D illustrate gift articles in accordance with the invention, where the gift package decoration is symbolic of a celebrated event;

Fig. 6 is a front perspective view of the container of the gift articles of Figs. 5A to 5D, where the container is closed;

Fig. 7 is a front perspective view for the container of Fig. 6, where the container is open;

Fig. 8 is a cross sectional illustration of the container of Figs. 6 and 7; and

Figs. 9 and 10 are top plan views of the two portions of the container Figs. 6 and 7.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments of the Invention

[0029] As used herein, the terms “decoration” and “gift package decoration” refer to any decorative article appropriate for decorating a gift package, such as ribbons, bows, and decorative cards.

[0030] As used herein, the term “ribbon” refers to any piece of flexible or inflexible material having the appearance of a conventional ribbon. That is, the material resembles, but need not be, a strip or band of fabric or cloth. Ribbons may be textured or non-textured, transparent, translucent, or opaque, and colored or uncolored. Transparent ribbons may also be clear or tinted. In accordance with the invention, ribbons may be formed of any material useful in a gift article, and may be flat, looped, or tied in knots or bows, or configured to give the appearance of being tied in knots or bows.

[0031] One embodiment of the gift article according to the present invention is illustrated in Figs. 1 to 3. The gift article 10 comprises a gift package decoration 12, which, as illustrated, comprises a ribbon in the form of a bow, and a container 11. As discussed above, and as with the other embodiments of the invention discussed below, the container may comprise one or more pieces. As illustrated, the container 11 comprises a first portion 14, which functions as a base, and a second portion 16, which functions as a cover, closure, or lid for the first portion 14 of the container 11. Optionally, the gift article 10 further comprises at least one gift tag 18 and at least one peel away adhesive strip 24 for attaching article 10 to a gift package. The illustrated first and second portions 14 and 16 together define a cavity or interior volume 20 in which gift items, such as confectionery pieces, e.g., sugar shelled candies, may be stored. The interior volume or cavity 20 is accessible through at least one opening 22 defined by the first portion 14. As illustrated, the first portion 14 is attached to gift package decoration 12 by an adhesive material, but may be attached by any suitable fastener known in the art, such as a rivet, clamp, clasp, or pin. The illustrated first and second portions 14 and 16 of the container 11 together form complimentary portions of an oblate spheroid. However, as will be recognized by those skilled in the art, the base 14 and the closure 16 may have any decorative or functional shape

useful in the invention. For example, the container 11 may have a shape that is symbolic of a celebrated event, such as a birthday cake.

[0032] The first and second portions 14 and 16 of the container 11 are preferably, but need not be, formed from the same material, such as a plastic, which may be transparent, opaque, or translucent, and of any color, color pattern, or design. For example, as will be recognized by those skilled in the art, the first portion 14 may be opaque and the second portion 16 transparent to allow viewing of the gifts within the container 11. Moreover, the second portion 16, which functions as a closure, need not be substantially the same size as the first portion 14, as shown in Fig. 1. Preferably, at least a portion of the container 11 is formed of a material that is substantially rigid. The second portion 16 need only be of an appropriate size and shape to securely cover opening 22, where opening 22 is of a sufficient size and appropriate shape to allow access to the interior volume 20. In addition, the second portion 16 may be totally removable from the base 14 or attached or tethered by a ribbon, string, hinge or the like (not shown).

[0033] Preferably, the first and second portions 14 and 16 of the container 11 are configured to be secured together in a manner that prevents exposure of the contents of container 11 to the environment. More preferably, the first and second portions 14 and 16 are configured to be secured sufficiently to allow the container 11 to function as a primary package or "first wrap" for an edible product, where the container 11 prevents dirt, excess moisture, infestation, and other such contaminants from entering the container 11. The container may also have a tamper evident feature, such that the package reveals a non-reversible physical change when the contents of the container are accessed. This may include a pop-up button, a tear/break in the packaging and the like.

[0034] A further embodiment of the gift article of the invention is illustrated in Fig. 4. As shown there, the gift article 30 comprises a gift package decoration 32 and a container 34, where the gift package decoration 32 is in the form of a molded bow, and the gift package decoration and a first portion 35 of the container 34 are molded from a single piece of material, such as plastic. As with the embodiment illustrated in Figs. 1 to 3, the material may be transparent,

translucent, or opaque. The container 34 is configured to store gift items, as described above.

[0035] The container 34 of the gift article 30 further comprises a second portion 36, which functions as a closure, and is configured to cover an opening defined by the first portion 34 in the same manner as the container 11 of the gift article 10, illustrated in Figs. 1 to 3, such that the opening is uncovered when the second portion 36 is removed to provide access to gift items stored in the container 34. Optionally, the gift article 30 may also comprise one or more tags 40 carried on the bow on which an address or a brand name, can be written.

[0036] As with the embodiment discussed above, the container 34 is preferably configured to be secured in a manner that prevents exposure of the contents of container 34 to the environment. More preferably, the container 34 is configured to function as a primary package or “first wrap” for an edible product, where the container 34 prevents dirt, excess moisture, infestation, and other such contaminants from entering the container. The container 34 may also have a tamper evident feature, such that the package reveals a non-reversible physical change when the contents of the container are accessed. This may include a pop-up button, a tear/break in the packaging and the like, such that any tampering with the contents will be evident to a purchaser.

[0037] In a further embodiment, at least one of the gift package decoration and the gift items within the container are symbolic of or have at least one characteristic corresponding to an event celebrated by the giving of the gift, where the gift package decoration may be two- or three-dimensional. For example, for a gift at a baby shower, the gift package decoration could be a representation of a baby toy, such as a rattle, which is preferably pink for a girl or blue for a boy. In addition, the gift articles could be pink and white or blue and white confectioneries.

[0038] For a birthday gift, the gift package decoration could be in the form of one or more balloons, a birthday cake, or birthday candles. For a wedding or anniversary gift, the gift package decoration could take the form of at least one of flowers, bells, and doves. For St. Valentine’s Day or as an expression of love, the gift package decoration could be in the form of a heart. For Christmas, the gift

package decoration could depict a Christmas tree or package, a snowman, a sleigh with or without reindeer, Santa, or a religious scene. For a thank you or as an expression of friendship, the gift package decoration could be in the form of stars, flowers, and the like. Non-limiting examples of gift package decorations in accordance with the invention are illustrated in Figs. 5A to 5D, where the gift package decoration 40A in Fig. 5A is a baby rattle, the gift package decoration 40B in Fig. 5B is a birthday balloon, the gift package decoration 40C in Fig. 5C is a heart, the gift package decoration 40D in Fig. 5D is a star.

[0039] Again, the gift items within the container preferably have at least one characteristic corresponding to the celebrated event. For example, red and green candies for Christmas, and red or a mix of red and white candies for St. Valentine's Day.

[0040] As illustrated in Figs. 5A to 5D the container 42 is a clear plastic dome. However, as will be understood by one of ordinary skill in the art, the containers 42A to 42 D may have any shape useful for holding gift items, and may also have a shape symbolic of or corresponding to the celebrated event, such as a birthday cake. As with the containers discussed above, the containers 42A to 42 D may be transparent, opaque, or translucent, and may be of any appropriate color. Preferably, containers 42A to 42C are transparent, such that the contents are visible.

[0041] A useful container 50 for storing and displaying small gift items in the gift article of the invention is illustrated in Figs. 6 to 8, where Fig. 6 is a perspective illustration of a closed container, Fig. 7 is a perspective illustration of an open container 50, Fig. 8 is a cross-sectional illustration of the container of Figs. 6 and 7, and Figs. 9 and 10 are top plan views of the individual portions of the container of Figs. 6 and 7. The container 50 comprises a first portion 51 and a second portion 52. As illustrated, a part of the first portion 51 is in the shape of a dome 53, and defines an inner volume 54. The first portion 51 also comprises a lip or flange 55 that extends from the circumference 56 of the inner volume 54. The flange 55 is preferably configured to allow the container 50 to be affixed to the gift package decoration (not shown).

[0042] The second portion 52 comprises an outer lip 57 and a ridge 58 configured to fit within the circumference 56 of the inner volume 54. Preferably, the fit between the circumference 56 and the ridge 58 is such that a friction seal is formed. The second portion 52, as illustrated, further comprises an optional tab 59 that may be used to remove the second portion 52 from the first portion 51 by simple finger pressure, allowing access to gift items stored in the container 50. At least one of the outer lip 57 and the tab 59 are configured to preferably prevent splashback. That is, at least one of the lip 57 and the tab 59 will prevent any portion of the second portion 52 from entering the inner volume of the first portion 51, which could cause gift items within the inner volume 54 to be forced out of the container 50, when the second portion 52 is removed from the first portion 51. The second portion 52 may further comprise one or more ribs or ridges 60, configured to allow the second portion to flex and expand into the inner volume, pressing any gift items within the container 50 in the direction of the first portion 51 to better display the gift items, and to accommodate a wide fill range within the container 50.

[0043] As with the other containers described above, the container 50 may be formed from any material known in the art, such as a plastic material. The container 50 may be transparent, opaque, or translucent, and may be of any desired color, color pattern, or design. Preferably, the container 50 is formed from clear polyethylene terephthalate (PET), and is preferably seal grade having a thickness of from about 0.01 to about 0.02 inch. Prototypes of the container 50 illustrated in Figs. 6 to 8 have been produced using 0.0175 inch Seal PET for the first portion and 0.0125 inch Seal PET for the second portion.

[0044] As illustrated in Figs. 5A to 5D, containers 42A to 42D are of the type illustrated in Figs. 6 and 7. The containers 42A to 42D are attached to the gift package decoration 40 with the second portion 52 positioned between the first portion 51 and the gift package decoration 40. To access the gift items within the containers 42A to 42D, the container may be removed from the gift package decoration 40, or the first portion may be removed from the second portion, leaving the second portion attached to the gift package decoration 40. As will be

understood by those of skill in the art, any other useful configuration may be used with the invention.

[0045] As with the embodiments discussed above, the container 50 is preferably configured to be secured in a manner that prevents exposure of the contents of container 50 to the environment. More preferably, the container 50 is configured to be secured sufficiently to allow the container 50 to function as a “first wrap”, such that no additional wrapping is required when the gift article of the invention is placed on sale, and is preferably clear, such that any tampering with the contents will be evident to a purchaser.

[0046] Thus it will be appreciated that the present invention provides a decorative gift package or article in which a container for gift items like candy is integrated with a gift package decoration, such as a bow or ribbon for direct attachment to a further gift package.

[0047] This invention is not limited by the embodiments disclosed herein and it will be appreciated that numerous modifications and other embodiments may be devised by those skilled in the art. Therefore, it is intended that the appended claims cover all such modifications and embodiments that fall within the true spirit and scope of the present invention.